

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(03)/ST/83
12 September 2003

(03-4855)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Fifth Session
Cancún, 10 - 14 September 2003

Original: Spanish

BOLIVIA

Statement by H.E. Dr Carlos Saavedra Bruno
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship

I should like to commence my statement by thanking the Government and people of Mexico for the warm hospitality extended to us during our participation in this Meeting. Likewise, I should like to thank the Chairman of the General Council, Ambassador Carlos Pérez del Castillo, the Director-General, Dr Supachai Panitchpakdi, and, especially, my colleague Minister Luis Ernesto Derbez and the WTO Secretariat.

For almost two decades, Bolivia has been resolutely advocating the advantages of an open trading system such as that advocated by the WTO.

Bolivia's economy was one of the first in the American continent to implement a unilateral economic policy of openness and a process of structural change consistent with the free market model.

It is one of the few WTO Member countries that has complied strictly with the WTO principles and rules. Furthermore, in the Latin American region, Bolivia is an active participant in all the integration processes.

Nevertheless, despite the time that has gone by, despite our on-going adjustment efforts, despite all the sacrifices we have made, the Bolivian people are not living any better than they did before embracing the trade liberalization model. On the contrary, the men and women of our country have gradually seen their modest living standards fall still further.

Consequently, we cannot apprehend the economy without taking into account its consequences, nor can we separate free trade from the problems and aspirations of our people. We must not consider that what is at stake is a purely technical issue because what we are discussing here has a political dimension, and above all a social dimension.

In this respect, the Doha Development Agenda marked a decisive step forward. Doha implied the commencement of real hope for our countries. It allowed us to view the future with optimism, with the courage to face up to our problems. This is why we are fully convinced that we must maintain and reinforce the original meaning of this Mandate so that the development dimension continues to be the central focus that will allow us to reach a single consensus on all the issues.

It is therefore my responsibility to reiterate an appeal that is neither new or original, but which I cannot escape: all Members of the WTO must assume to the utmost the liberalization commitment, especially as regards agriculture, by eliminating export subsidies and domestic support, and by substantially increasing market access.

To a large extent, Bolivia's agricultural sector is made up of peasants and indigenous people. How can we require of them, who are truly the poorest among the poor, liberalization which farmers in rich countries refuse to accept? How can we ask the under-developed countries to assume the cost of liberalization which developed countries are evading?

I should not like to miss this opportunity to express my firm commitment and support for the efforts being made by the Group of 21 to achieve real results at this Ministerial Meeting in Cancún. We are not simply speaking of solidarity or justice. We are, essentially, talking of the future of the current international economic system and the increasingly likely possibility that the poorest countries will collapse as a result of lack of understanding on the part of developed countries.

We cannot refuse to face reality. Outside these walls, there are millions of people who are hoping that we shall be able to make progress, resolutely, towards different, more just and more equitable relations among the countries of the world, their societies and their economies.

We have the opportunity to start to change things and we face the challenge of being capable of doing so.
